

CHAPTER EIGHT

VARIETIES OF AMERICAN NATIONALISM

Stabilizing Economic Growth
Expanding Westward
The "Era of Good Feelings"
Sectionalism and Nationalism
The Revival of Opposition

Like a "fire bell in the night," as Thomas Jefferson put it, the issue of slavery arose after the War of 1812 to threaten the unity of the nation. The debate began when the territory of Missouri applied for admission to the Union, raising the question of whether it would be a free or slaveholding state. But the larger issue was whether the vast new western regions of the United States would ultimately move into the orbit of the North or the South.

The Missouri crisis was significant because it was a sign of the sectional crises to come. But at the time, it was also significant because it stood in such sharp contrast to the rising American nationalism of the years following the war. Whatever forces might be working to pull the nation apart, stronger ones were acting for the moment to draw it together.

STABILIZING ECONOMIC GROWTH

The end of the War of 1812 allowed the United States to resume its economic growth and territorial expansion. A vigorous postwar boom led to a disastrous bust in 1819. Brief though it was, the collapse was evidence that the United States continued to lack some of the basic institutions necessary to sustain long-term growth.



FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC AT WEYMOUTH LANDING C. 1845. BY SUSAN MERRETT. Celebrations of Independence Day, like this one in eastern Massachusetts, became major festive events throughout the United States in the early nineteenth century, a sign of rising American nationalism. (Seen Torrey Martin, *American*, 1826-1879, Anti-Slavery Picnic at Weymouth Landing, Massachusetts, c. 1845, colorist's gouache, and collage on paper, 74.9 x 100 cm, Gift of Elizabeth R. Langham, 1990.1846 image © The Art Institute of Chicago)

TIMELINE

1815	1816	1818	1819	1820	1823	1824	1828
U.S. takes western lands from Indians	Second Bank of U.S. Monroe elected president	Seminole War ends	Panic and depression Dartmouth College v. Woodward; McCulloch v. Maryland	Missouri Compromise Monroe reelected	Monroe Doctrine	John Quincy Adams elected	Tariff of abominations Jackson elected president

The Government and Economic Growth

Partner Economic Problems

The War of 1812 produced chaos in shipping and banking, and it exposed dramatically the inadequacy of the existing transportation and financial systems. The aftermath of the war, therefore, saw the emergence of a series of political issues connected with national economic development.

The wartime experience underlined the need for another national bank. After the expiration of the first Bank's charter, a large number of state banks had issued vast quantities of bank notes, creating a confusing variety of currency of widely differing value. It was difficult to tell what any bank note was really worth, and counterfeiting was easy. In response to these problems, Congress chartered a second Bank of the United States in 1816, much like its predecessor of 1791 but with more capital. The national bank could not forbid state banks from issuing notes, but its size and power enabled it to compel the state banks to issue only sound notes or risk being forced out of business.

Congress also acted to promote manufacturing, which the war (by cutting off imports) had already greatly stimulated. The American textile industry had experienced a particularly dramatic growth. Between 1807 and 1815, the total number of cotton spindles in the country increased more than fifteenfold, from 8,000 to 130,000. Until 1814, the textile factories—most of them in New England—produced only yarn and thread; families operating hand looms at home did the actual weaving of cloth. Then the Boston merchant Francis Cabot Lowell, after examining textile machinery in England, developed a power loom better than its English counterpart. In 1813, in Waltham, Massachusetts, Lowell founded the first mill in America to carry on the processes of spinning and weaving under a single roof.

But the end of the war suddenly dimmed the prospects for American industry. British ships swarmed into American ports and unloaded cargoes of manufactured goods, many priced below cost. In

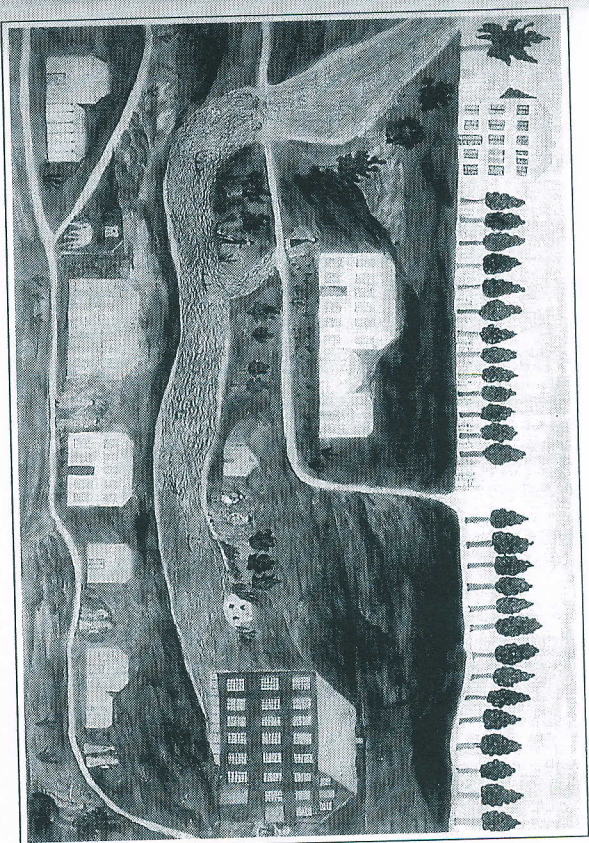
The Protective Tariff

1816, protectionists in Congress passed a tariff law that effectively limited competition from abroad on a wide range of items, including cotton cloth, despite objections from agricultural interests, who stood to pay higher prices for manufactured goods.

Transportation

Inadequate Transportation System

The nation's most pressing economic need was for improvements in its transportation system. An old debate resumed: Should the federal government help to finance roads and other "internal improvements"? The idea of using government funds to finance road building was not a new one. When Ohio entered the Union in 1803, the federal government agreed that part of the proceeds from the sale of public lands there should finance



AN EARLY MILL IN NEW ENGLAND This early folk painting of about 1814 shows the small town of East Chelmsford, Massachusetts—still primarily agrarian, with its rural houses, open fields, and grazing livestock, but with a small textile mill already operating along the stream, at night. A little more than a decade later, the town had been transformed into a major manufacturing center and renamed for the family that owned the mills: Lowell. (Part of the Town of Chelmsford by Miss Warren. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia)

road construction. And in 1807, Congress enacted a law proposed by the Jefferson administration that permitted using revenues from Ohio land sales to finance a National Road from the Potomac River to the Ohio. By 1818, the highway ran as far as Wheeling, Virginia, on the Ohio River; and the Lancaster Pike, financed in part by the state of Pennsylvania, extended westward to Pittsburgh.

At the same time, steam-powered shipping was expanding rapidly. By 1816, river steamers were beginning to journey up and down the Mississippi to the Ohio River, and up the Ohio as far as Pittsburgh. Steamboats were soon carrying more cargo on the Mississippi than all the earlier forms of river transport—flatboats, barges, and others—combined. They stimulated the agricultural economy of the West and the South by providing access to markets at greatly reduced cost, and they enabled eastern manufacturers to send their finished goods west much more readily.

Nevertheless, serious gaps in the nation's transportation network remained, as experience during the War of 1812 had shown. Once the British blockade had cut off Atlantic shipping, the coastal roads had become choked by the unaccustomed volume of north-south traffic. Congress passed a bill introduced by Representative John C. Calhoun that allowed the

Federally Financed Improvements Debated